

The Sakai and Semang Languages in the Malay Peninsula and their relation to the Mon-Khmer Languages.

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In the third and fourth numbers of the eighth part of the sixth series of the *Bijdragen tot Taal-Land-en Völkenskunde van Nederlandsche-Indië*, published in 1901, is a paper by P. W. Schmidt, S.V.D., written in German with the title "*Die Sprachen der Sakei und Semang auf Malacca und ihr Verhältniss zu den Mon-Khmer-Sprachen.*" The following abstract of it will I think, have great interest for readers of the *Journal*.

The author begins his introduction as follows:—

"More important than these connections with the Anamite language are the undeniable relations of our monosyllabic Khasi-Mon-Khmer root-stock with the Khol language with that of Nancowry and with the dialects of the aborigines of the Malay Peninsula. We should not however be justified in deducing therefrom an ancestral connection with these partly polysyllabic languages.' So wrote E. Kuhn towards the end of his 'Articles on the languages of Further India' (*Beiträge zur Sprachenkunde Hinterindiens. Sitzgsb.: d. k. bayer. ac. d. w. phil.-hist. LL 1899 I. p. 219 f.f.*) Thus he leaves open the question whether there exists between the Khasi-Mon-Khmer group and the Khol languages, that of Nancowry and the dialects of the aborigines of the Malay Peninsula, an intimate actual relationship, or whether the evident identities are due merely to external influences.

"Some years later—1894—E. (sic.) Otto Blagden in the *Journal of the Straits Branch* 27 pages 21-56, without apparently knowing anything of Kuhn's work put forward a more

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“complete comparison of the Vocabulary of the dialects of the Peninsula aborigines with that of the Mon-Khmer (Anam) languages. But as his title “Early Indo-Chinese influences in the Malay Peninsula, as illustrated by some of the Dialects of the Aboriginal Tribes” shows, Blagden also “did not go so far as to conclude that the identities to which he drew attention arose from any intimate connection between the two groups of languages. He says, ‘But even to assume that the aboriginal dialects are cognate languages which should be classified in the Mon-Annam family would be going further than our evidence justifies us in doing.’ Neither Blagden nor Kuhn had examined the whole material which is available on the subject of these aboriginal dialects. It is my purpose to collate this full material and to endeavour by its aid to remove the present uncertainty concerning these dialects and to settle their genealogical relation beyond doubt. For this purpose it is first necessary to settle the relationships of these dialects to one another, a task which in itself demands much labour since no comprehensive work has been done on the subject. The first half of my paper will comprise this comparison, and the comparison of the aboriginal dialects with the Mon-Khmer languages will occupy the second half.”

His first part the author begins with a list of publications in which words, vocabularies, etc. from the aboriginal dialects have been given. This list is I presume the completest yet published and I give a full abstract of it. *Journal of the S. B. R. A. S.* Vol. I, p. 38; V, p. 129; VII, p. 94; VIII, p. 9; XXIV, p. 13; XXVI, p. 41; XXVII, p. 27; XXX, p. 13.

(1). T. J. Newbold “Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca.” London, 1839, Vol. II, pp: 369-434.

(2). The MSS of Hrolf Vaughan Stevens. Veröffentl: d. K. Museums f. Völkerk. zu Berlin; Bd 2 und 3.

(3). Marsden’s *Miscellaneous Essays*:—A Short List of ‘Jakoon’ words from Raffles of ‘Jooroo’ Semang (J. Anderson given as collector) and of ‘Quedah’ Semang.

(4). Roberts’ *Embassy to the Eastern Coasts of Cochin China, Siam, Muscat*:—‘Jooroo’ Semang—A list of words (Mr. Maingay given as collector) and ‘Quedah’ Semang (McLunes

given as collector):—apparently the same lists as those given by Marsden.

(5). Klaproth, *Journ. Asiatique* 12 pp. 241-243 (Semang.)

(6.) Mentera-Glossen (Mantra) by Borie, *Tijdschrift voor Ind.-Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* 10 pp: 439, &c.

(7). Crawford. *History of Indian Archipelago*, Edinburgh 1820. Nrs. 12: ('Quedah' Semang—apparently the same list as given by Marsden and Roberts).

(8). Sakaya S. Kerbou &c. by L. de Morgan "Bulletin de la Société Normande de Géographie, Rouen 7. 1885. p. 434 &c. also printed in L. de Morgan *Exploration dans la presqu'île Malaise*, Paris 1886.

(9). J. Low, Sakai in Perak. *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*. Old Series IV, p. 430.

(10). Tomlin. A list of Samang words, "Extract from the Malacca Observer from an article on Tomlin's Mission-Travels (Royal Library, Berlin).

(11). Mikloucho-Maclay, *Tijdschrift voor Ind.-Taal-hand-en Volkenkunde* 23 reprinted in Vol. I of J. S. B. R. A. S.*

The next ten papers contain a critical examination of this material. The author points out that several of the old lists are wholly or partly copies of one another and laments the infinite variety in the methods adopted by the different collectors in the spelling of words given. 'Clifford alone' he says (to some extent Blagden and Hewitt) makes a praiseworthy 'attempt to give a determinate value to the vowels used.'

The author himself employs throughout the system of Fr. Müller except that he uses g instead of dz.

The next 75 pages contain a vocabulary compiled from the various lists, etc., detailed above. This vocabulary contains

* Here and elsewhere the author also quotes the following books :—

Alb: Grünwedel. *Veröffentlichungen aus d. k. Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin* (1894).

Bd: 3 Teil 2. p. 145. (Bibliography and Glossary.)

R. Martin. *Die Ur einwohner der Malayischen Halbinsel*. Sonder Abdr. aus. d. *Corresp.—Blatt der deutsch Anthrop. Gesellschaft*, 1899. Nrs. 10 p. 6.

1249 roots arranged alphabetically. The author explains that it is possible that in some cases further enquiry or rather fuller material for enquiry may show that some of his roots may require correction, but contends that for his purpose the arrangement adopted is the most useful one. All hypothetical root-forms are enclosed in brackets. All Malay loan-words are omitted.

Next follow the only available 'texts' viz:— those given by Skeat in *Berisi* by Clifford in *Sen-oi* and by de Morgan in *Sakai* of S. Kerbou and S. Raya, and in 'Söman.' The translations are given in each case.

The next thirty pages contain a discussion of the 'Grammatik.'

The fourth subsection of the first part is headed "The relation of the dialects to one another." The author begins as follows:— "The questions as to the relation of these languages to one another and to their correct grouping are the more important since the races who speak them have no ethnological unity. The Sakai although sharply distinguished from Mongolian races have a more Mongoloid character than have the Semang. The Semang on the other hand belong as even B. H. Meyer's very critical examination shows, to the Negritos. Our examination has therefore a further meaning in that it aids in answering the question whether these Semang-Negritos have a language of their own." In the next nine pages the author examines in detail the similarities and differences in the vocabularies of the various dialects and concludes that, as far as the present state of our knowledge allows us to judge, the Sakai and Semang languages are one. He then points out the two marked groups into which this one language falls. In the one group come the words, etc., collected from 'Quedah-Semang' Semang of Tjoh. Steven's Semang, Semang of Ulu Selama, Mikonho-Maclay's Ulu Kelantan and Ulu Petani, Tomlin's Semang 'Jooroo-Semang,' in the other words, etc., collected from Bersisi, Palou, Ulu Indau, Sakei of Sungei Raya, Clifford's Sen-oi, Sakai of J. Kerbon, Söman of de Morgan, Clifford's Tembe. Perak Semang and Chanderiang Sakai.

The author now points out that it is not safe to believe that collectors of vocabularies who have called certain races

Sakais or Semangs have in all cases correctly described them. He therefore tests these statements by the locality, physical peculiarities, etc., of the tribes in question. He points out that Semangs do not exist in the southern part of the peninsula and quotes R. Martin who gives as their country northern Perak, Kedah, Rahman, Rangan, and Kelantan, a description with which Stevens agrees. He further notes that the Semang use or have used the bow, and that there is no record of the Sakais having done so. He concludes that the Semangs in his first group are correctly described but that de Morgan's 'Söman' and the 'Perak Semangs,' and 'Kenning Semangs' mentioned in fifth volume of the J. S. B. R. A. S. may very possibly have been Sakais or at all events mixed races. The Sakai who form his second group fall linguistically into two sub-classes the divisions between which seem to be confirmed geographically by Clifford's line from Blanja on the Perak River to the Bidor Mountains and thence to Kuala Angin in Kelantan to the north of which line Clifford found his Tem-be to the south his Sen-oi. He concludes therefore that the Semang and Sakai form two different branches of one language and that the Sakai branch shows two sub-branches.

The second part is headed 'comparison of the Sakai and Semang languages' and opens with a list of books consulted by the author in his study of the latter. Then follows a list of those Mon-Khmer words and roots which are found to be similar to words and roots in Sakai and Semang. The author's comments on this are as follows :—"The above agreements seems "to me to be amply sufficient both in number and kind to negative the suggestion of 'A mere external borrowing.' As to the "their number out of the 1249 forms contained in the vocabulary "there are about 240 such agreements. That is in itself a notable "result but it gains in meaning when two things are borne in "mind :—First that most undoubtedly a part at least of the "materials for the Sakai and Semang languages are recorded "with a wrong or uncertain meaning thus rendering it difficult "or even impossible to find their correct equivalents in Mon-Khmer, and secondly that another part,—more specially that "collected by de Morgan and Stevens, is of such a nature "(names of implements and individual parts of them, of individ-

“ual plants, etc.) that in any case corresponding expressions for them could hardly be expected. Finally it must be pointed out that in these prefix-languages it is most difficult to find corresponding words in dictionaries which are arranged alphabetically according to the initial letters of the words, and that our vocabularies of a part at least of the Mon-Khmer languages are by no means complete.”

The words showing similarity are next arranged in groups as follows:—Nouns: 18 such as God, Thunder, Night, Rain, Stone, Fire, etc.; 8 such as Tree, Flower, Rice; 21 such as Louse, Fly, Egg, Dog, Elephant, Rhinoceros, etc.; 18 such as Man, Stranger, Wife, Aunt, Nephew, etc.; 33 such as Blood, Hair, Mouth, Neck, Belly, Elbow, etc.; and 13 such as Clothing, Arrow, Knife, Stick, etc.; Verbs: 61 including to go, give, sleep, fasten, see, sit, turn back, cry, call, speak, drink, etc.; and 33 Adjectives and Adverbs: such as many, white, with, bad, sweet, cold, etc. The author continues:—“The comprehensive manner in which all kinds of correspondences are represented and more especially in which the names for almost all parts of the human body show agreement and finally the large number of identities in verbs and adjectives leave, in so far as an examination of the grammatical relations of the two groups of languages offers no obstacle, one conclusion only, viz:—that there exists an inward and intimate condition between the Sakai and Semang languages and those of the Mon-Khmer.”

The author next points out that there is a small number of words occurring in many Sakai and Semang dialects for which no corresponding words can be found in Mon-Khmer, but he asserts that the existence of these can not disturb the conclusion drawn from the total result more especially as further search in the more out-of-the-way dialects of Mon-Khmer may yet reveal them. He then continues:—“As against these however great stress must be laid on the part that for those particular words which constitute the difference between Semang and Sakai no parallels can be found. If therefore we can rely upon our knowledge of the Mon-Khmer vocabulary it is very remarkable that it is these words and these (so to speak) alone which fail us. When further we bear in mind that the words in question are such as are in constant use in every day life it seems most im-

“probable that their parallels will be found in these Mon-Khmer languages of which we have at present any knowledge and it may be regarded as very doubtful indeed if any entirely new branch of these languages will be discovered which will supply the deficiencies. It seems therefore very probable that we have in these words a remnant of the former Semang-Negrito-language. If that is really the case then further and more exhaustive research will certainly reveal still more material of the same kind. May this be a keen incentive to those who are in a position to make such researches to commence them without delay before the rapidly advancing disappearance of these races render further proof ever impossible! Perhaps we may be able to oppose some positive facts to that wave of theories which has burst over these poor Negritos!”

The next eighteen pages are occupied with a close comparison of the “Grammatik” of the two groups: The following conclusions are drawn:—

- (i) The sounds are in essentials the same.
- (ii) The word-formation follows the same laws.
- (iii) The personal pronoun shows as much identity as can be expected.
- (iv) Pronouns and adverbs are in essentials demonstratively the same.
- (v) The syntactical relations of nouns, adjectives and verbs are the same.
- (vi) The numeral is the same in form and construction.

The author continues:—“Against these resemblances and identities no important divergencies are as yet opposed. When we consider them in conjunction with the wide spread identities in the vocabulary we are justified in concluding that the Sakai and Semang languages are intimately related with the Mon-Khmer languages and must be regarded as a member of that family. In the case of the Sakai languages this conclusion can be pushed further. When we consider the physical resemblances between the Sakai and the Mon-Khmer peoples we are justified in saying that the language now spoken by the Sakai was the original Sakai language.”

The author then gives the following four physical characteristics of the Mon-Khmer people:—

(i) Dolicho-cephalic skulls.

(ii) Darkish skins.

(iii) Eyes horizontal not oblique.

(iv) Hair wavy not straight and not woolly; and he quotes R. Martin and Logan as proving that the Sakai have the same peculiarities.

He continues:—"It is otherwise with the Semang. Their darker colour, and woolly hair separate them anthropologically both from the Sakai and from the Mon-Khmer people. The fact that they speak what is essentially the same language can only be explained on the assumption that they have abandoned their own and adopted a foreign one. As is the case with the Negritos of the Philippines the original Negriti language seems to have been lost although indeed in the case of the Semang a number of words appear to exist as a new want of it.

The paper here ends. It covers 180 octavo pages and is obviously the outcome of most careful and labourious work. It is much too important not to be noticed in the Society's Journal and in default of a review by a competent hand my abstract may, I trust, suffice to direct the attention of members to it.